

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 342 763

SP 033 652

AUTHOR Gary, Karla P.
TITLE Enhancing Effective Communication between Teachers and Parents through Interactive Inservice Training.
PUB DATE Dec 91
NOTE 69p.; M.S. Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication Skills; *Conflict Resolution; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Improvement Programs; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Interaction Process Analysis; *Parent Teacher Conferences; *Parent Teacher Cooperation; Practicum Papers; Role Playing

ABSTRACT

Teachers often feel intimidated or defenseless when dealing with issues of concern and conflict during parent-teacher conferences. Teachers have indicated a need for: (1) training in effective conferencing skills; and (2) learning to approach parents as cooperative individuals willing to participate in the total educational process of their children. To fulfill a practicum requirement, a series of inservice workshops were conducted for the purpose of improving parent-teacher communication. Interactive inservice sessions were developed and implemented which emphasized both conflicting and nonconflicting educational situations. Teachers participated in role-playing exercises, discussions, and consultations; they were rated on behavior checklists and formally evaluated upon completion of training. Results suggest that significant growth in effective parent-conferencing communication skills emerged for the target sample population; and evaluations demonstrated 50-100 percent growth in competency frequency measures. Supportive surveys, competency based checklists, handouts, and pre/posttest data are appended. Tables include pretest scores, an evaluation checklist, a behavioral checklist summary, and a pre/posttest summary. (Author/LL)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED342763

ENHANCING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN
TEACHERS AND PARENTS THROUGH
INTERACTIVE INSERVICE TRAINING

by

KARLA P. GARY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

K. Gary

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

A Practicum Report
submitted to the Faculty of the Center for the
Advancement of Education of Nova University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science.

The abstract of this report may be placed in a
National Database System for reference.

December/1991

BEST COPY AVAILABLE 2

SP033 652

Abstract

Enhancing Effective Communication Between Teachers and Parents Through Interactive Inservice Training.

Gary, Karla P., 1991: Practicum Report, Nova University, Center for the Advancement of Education.
Descriptors: Communication Skills/Parents and Teachers/Administrators/Conferencing/Parent Conferences/Evaluation (Appraising or Judging Persons, Organizations . . .)

Parent-teacher communication is a vital part of a student's educational program and should be an ongoing process. Teachers often feel intimidated or defenseless when dealing with issues of concern and conflict in parent-teacher conferences. Teachers have indicated a desire for training in effective communication skills in an effort to approach parents as cooperative individuals, willing to work together in the total educational process. A series of interactive inservices were planned and implemented to address conflicting and nonconflicting educational situations. Teachers participated in role-playing exercises, were rated on behavior checklists and formally evaluated upon completion of the series of inservice training sessions. The practicum results indicated significant growth in effective communication skills competency areas for the target sample population. Teacher evaluations showed 50-100 percent growth in competency frequency measures. The writer concluded that through inservice training discussions, role-playing, evaluations, and consultations, teachers demonstrated improved effective communication skills for parent conferencing. Appendices include supportive surveys, competency based checklists, handouts, pre and posttest data.

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Karla P. Gary
Karla P. Gary

Document Release

Permission is hereby given to Nova University to distribute copies of this applied research project on request from interested parties. It is my understanding that Nova University will not charge for this dissemination other than to cover the costs of duplicating, handling, and mailing of the material.

Karla P. Gary
Student's signature

12/6/91
Date

iii

Table of Contents

	Page
Title Page	i
Abstract	ii
Authorship Statement	iii
Observer's Verification	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	vii
Chapters	
I. Purpose	1
II. Research and Solution Strategy	6
III. Method	14
IV. Results	21
V. Recommendations	25
Reference List	27
Appendices	28
Appendix A: Teacher Survey	29
Appendix B: Pretest	31
Appendix C: Teacher Evaluation	33
Appendix D: Role-Play	35
Appendix E: Behavioral Checklist	39
Appendix F: Master Teacher: Getting in Shape for Parent Contact	41

	Page
Appendix G: Vague Response Sheet	44
Appendix H: Inservice Training II: Non-Defensive Communication	46
Appendix I: Parent Contact Form	49
Appendix J: Newsletter Articles	51
Appendix K: Parent Communication Form	53
Appendix L: Video/Discussion Role-Playing ...	55
Appendix M: Inservice III: Role-Plays	57
Appendix N: Posttest	59

List of Tables

	Page
Table 1: Pretest Scores	4
Table 2: Evaluation Checklist	21
Table 3: Behavioral Checklist Summary	22
Table 4: Pre/Posttest Summary	22

CHAPTER I

Purpose

This practicum was implemented in a summer school program consisting of 12 classroom teachers, three computer teachers, and two educational leaders all of whom were seeking higher-level degrees in the areas of elementary education, primary education, exceptional student education, reading, and computer science. The teachers varied in educational and professional backgrounds ranging from elementary to adult vocational education.

There were 54 students ranging from kindergarten through eighth grades enrolled in a private summer program designed to provide remedial and tutorial educational services to students who were potentially at risk academically and/or were identified through psychoeducational assessment as special needs learners. The students were from middle to upper-middle class backgrounds. There was significant parental concern for the students' educational accomplishments as the request for parent-teacher contacts and conferences were frequent. The students were administered

extensive preliminary assessment which enabled the classroom teachers to identify specific areas of academic strengths and weaknesses to pinpoint skills, and develop specific curriculum strategies to meet individual needs. Upon implementation of the students' educational prescriptions, teachers began parent-teacher conferences which afforded parents a continuous opportunity to review their child's educational progress. The students were taught through individualized and small group instruction, where the teacher-pupil ratio was four to one.

This writer was selected as an intern practicum student seeking a master of science degree in educational leadership. Responsibilities in the summer program included compiling assessment and conference schedules, assisting teachers with curricular and behavioral needs, addressing specific educational concerns, providing teacher evaluation data, and working cooperatively with the site administrators. Based upon teacher observations and input, it was further identified that teachers were uncertain about defusing conflicts in parent-teacher conferences, and were concerned about the appropriateness of sharing

educational information and decisions with parents. Teachers were assisted with parent conferencing by being provided with "helpful hints" and strategies, and by having administrative staff members attending individual parent conferences to provide input and feedback when it was appropriate.

Day to day duties included classroom visitations and observations, addressing behavioral needs which encompassed implementing behavior management strategies, identifying and locating curricular activities to serve as enablers for remediation of identified skills and ensuring that teachers were provided materials necessary to meet the students' needs.

Because parents have expressed the desire to be an integral part of their children's education and teachers have indicated the need for assistance and direction when confronted with parental concerns, there existed a need to provide teachers with strategies to improve their verbal communication skills with parents. Based on a teacher survey consisting of questions relative to verbal communication skills in parent conferencing, 11 out of 12 teachers indicated that they would participate in "effective parent-teacher

communication" training if it were offered. The teachers also expressed a need for helpful hints to assist in parent conferencing. Four teachers further indicated feelings of intimidation and discomfort when faced with opposing opinions from parents regarding educational recommendations (Appendix A:29).

Based on a True/False pretest administered to the teachers, one-third of the total population received below-passing scores of 40 percent (Appendix B:31). These teachers were targeted for inclusion in inservice training to further develop and enhance effective communication skills with parents.

Table 1
Pretest Scores

Teacher	Pretest Scores
Phyllis	80%
Rod	80%
Mary	80%
Victor	80%
Jean	60%
Ray	60%
Anne	60%
Penny	60%
Beth	40%
Susie	40%
Kim	40%
Betty	40%
Robin	40%

Objectives:

At the end of an eight-week session, four out of five teachers will improve their verbal communication skills by 50 percent when engaged in parent conferences as measured by a written summative evaluation.

Through six weeks of interactive inservices based upon lectures, demonstrations, audio visuals, and handouts, the teachers will role-play conflicting and nonconflicting situations, utilizing effective communication skills, demonstrating an improvement of at least 10 points as measured by a competency based communication checklist.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

It is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to love, nurture, guide, and educate students; however, it is also imperative that the teacher be able to inform parents of their child's academic, social, and emotional progress. Teachers need to be effective communicators when providing parents with information regarding their children. A research of the literature indicates that "most teachers and parents want to communicate and interact with each other, but are prevented from doing so because they lack the procedures for resolving communication problems" (Rutherford and Edgar, 1979:85). Research also shows that those children whose parents are involved in their school experience and feel that they are being supported and appreciated by school personnel, clearly have an advantage to achieve and adjust to the total school program.

Ideally, teachers should have contact with parents on a regular basis. It is important to have an established rapport with parents before problems or

concerns arise. Parents have the right to be informed about their child's progress and about any situations the child may be experiencing in the school environment. Most teachers are eager to provide a sound educational program for their students, and welcome parents who are interested and concerned about the educational process. In some cases, teachers feel intimidated by parents when faced with conflicting opinions regarding educational decisions, or those who are bent on proving a point rather than accepting the expertise of school personnel. Developing a working relationship with parents is important for teachers in order for them to become a team working in the best interest of their child's educational success.

Parents serve as important providers of information about their children. Often, there are unusual circumstances and situations that teachers need to be made aware of as they develop educational programs for students. Teachers welcome information from parents when it is provided in a nonthreatening manner. Likewise, parents are more perceptive of and receptive to school information when it is presented appropriately. When teachers have been trained to

effectively communicate with parents, they are able to present an action plan to parents in an effort to demonstrate their knowledge and expertise in the areas of concern. A skilled teacher allows for follow-up with parents in an effort to provide continuous communication between the home and school. Teachers must be trained in establishing a rapport with parents, sharing information clearly and concisely, asking questions without intimidation, expressing concerns and feelings, summarizing events of parent conferences, and providing follow-up in constructive ways.

Canter (1986:4) alludes to the fact that a

lack of training leaves many teachers unprepared for communicating effectively with parents. Therefore, without training, teachers generally approach difficult situations with parents in one of two ineffective ways.

Cantor states that teachers either avoid contact or they use nonassertive approaches (vagueness and passiveness) with parents. Without specific training and skills for effective communication, teachers are unable to approach and solicit support from parents.

A parent survey, as reported by Stallworth and Williams (1982), regarding parents' attitudes toward

school involvement indicates that of the parents surveyed in six states, 2,083 returned questionnaires suggesting that parents have a positive attitude toward being involved in school activities and programs. The survey supports this writer's opinion that parents want to be involved and work as team players in their child's education.

There are often barriers between parents and teachers when engaged in parent conferences. Parents sometimes feel intimidated when interacting with the "professionals," believing that the teacher is the expert and should know as much about a child as the parent does. Kappelman and Ackerman (1977:32) suggest that "for communication finally to occur, the teachers' attitude must be totally reversed to: 'As a professional, I can use the skills and knowledge of Joanne's mother to help me educate her.'" The barriers of professionalism must be recognized and worked through in order to promote a cooperative team, working toward a common goal.

Educational Jargon and Games

According to Kappelman and Ackerman (1977), teachers wish to communicate with parents but often use

words and present attitudes which display certain assumptions. These assumptions may include:

1. The school is always right in its overall teacher plans.
2. Students learn best by listening without question. Learning is the accumulation of facts transmitted by teachers.
3. Parents should take over the discipline of the child when the school cannot succeed in conforming the child.
4. A full explanation of the school process need not be given to parents because they would not understand it.
5. A teacher has to maintain her/his dignity at all times, but particularly when speaking to a parent.

It is believed that jargon is used in most conversations, however, it can affect conversations with parents when teachers are disseminating information regarding students. Teachers should ask parents if they understand educational terminology and otherwise explain the meaning of special terms and use a "workable" vocabulary.

The Parent's Needs

"The Psychological Corporation Test Service Bulletin No. 54 identifies two commandments that provide a sound basis for communicating to parents information obtained from testing" (cited in Salvia and Ysseldyke, 1981/1978:523). These commandments, being interdependent, are pointless in isolation. The first is that parents have the right to be apprised of their child's ability, continued performance, and any problems they experience. The second commandment is that the school is obligated to see that this information is communicated to parents in an understandable and useable manner. Teachers and school personnel must ensure that it gives supportable and real information which is presented in terms that parents will understand and find useful. When parents and teachers participate in conferences, it is the responsibility of school personnel to present and interpret information in a way in which parents are not defensive or intimidated.

Interpersonal Communication Skills

As humans, behavior can be adapted and altered so that people are able to learn to communicate more precisely

and to better understand what others are feeling and thinking. Through acquired skills and the utilization of them, teachers and parents can become more effective communicators. One of the major goals of effective communication is to prevent conflicting situations. As individuals who interact with others regarding issues of concern, teachers must be trained to communicate openly and precisely and make every effort to engage in cooperative decision making.

Educational information is of little use to parents if teachers are not trained to interpret and communicate it so that they can cooperatively make sound educational decisions. The need for teacher training and inservice must be recognized so that academic and behavioral data might be interpreted and communicated in ways which reflect the true needs of students in various educational settings.

Role-Playing

Research indicates that role-playing is a natural and simple tool

for improving meetings, conferences, and leadership-training sessions. It was not until Dr. J. L. Moreno of the Psychodramatic Institute in New York introduced methods which he called "psychodrama" and

"sociodrama" that role-playing for adults as a human relations training method came into its own. (Klein, 1956:17)

Role-playing may be used to stimulate discussions, train in skills and sensitivity to solve human relations and social problems. Participants in role-playing exercises can be oriented to specific tasks and functions within an organization. Members learn how to ask for, give, and summarize information, facilitate decision making, and enable others to communicate effectively.

Through role-playing, participants are able to cooperatively evaluate problems, develop strategies to solve problems, and effectively discuss solutions and outcomes of them. It was the writer's intent to facilitate the process by which teachers would gain clearer understanding and utilization of appropriate skills and techniques for effective communications between home and school.

CHAPTER III

Method

During the summer program, there were inservice training sessions scheduled, weekly. As part of the first inservice, the target population was provided a teacher survey (Appendix A:29) which addressed feelings of intimidation in conferencing, verbal and nonverbal communication skills, conflicting educational recommendations for students, and the probability of their participation in effective parent-teacher communication training, if it were provided. Eleven out of 12 of the classroom teachers indicated that they would participate in inservice training that would address these issues.

During the second inservice training session, a pretest (Appendix B:31) was administered to the teachers. This pretest emphasized teachers' knowledge of the use of vague language in parent conferencing, teacher appearance, confidence, body language, and conference preparation. Because one-third of the total population received below passing scores of 40 percent, these five teachers were targeted to demonstrate

improvement of their knowledge of effective communication and to apply appropriate skills when conferencing with parents regarding conflicting and nonconflicting situations. During the following week, this writer participated in initial parent-teacher conferences with the target teachers. The purpose of this conference was to discuss student evaluation data, skills to be remediated, methods and techniques to be used during the summer session. A competency based evaluation (Appendix C:33) was completed on each of the teachers. The competencies included stating the purpose of the conference, facial and body language, verbal language usage, the use of examples and samples to support educational decisions, extinguishing debates, summarizing information, follow-up, and redirecting conversations to original topics. During this initial conference, the collected data indicated that the target teachers demonstrated minimal proficiency in the competency areas. Based on the demonstrated areas of weaknesses, areas were identified for which weekly inservice topics were established. It was decided to provide 40-minute presentations at the weekly inservice meetings which allowed for topic

lectures and discussions followed by role-playing exercises (Appendix D:35). The teachers were divided into five groups utilizing the target teachers as role-playing teachers who conferenced with parents (second teachers) and a third teacher who served as a reporter for each group. The site administrators and educational leaders were assigned as evaluators, completing the behavioral checklist (Appendix E:39) for each group. The checklist consisted of behavioral indicators by which the evaluator rated the teachers role-playing on a scale ranging from good (3), fair (2), to poor (1). At the end of each role-playing exercise, total column scores were calculated.

Inservice Training One included a lecture on vague language, body language, and conferencing with parents who have conflicting opinions. For each topic an overview and supportive examples were provided. A handout (Appendix F:41) from "The Master Teacher: Getting in Shape for Parent Contact" and a list of vague terms were shared with the teachers (Appendix G:44). Following the discussion of these topics, the groups were identified and given role-playing situations (Appendix D:35). Upon completion of each

role-play, the group reporter gave a critique of the parent-teacher conference outcome. There was also an opportunity for discussion from the total group. The behavior checklist, which was provided for the target teachers, indicated significant scoring in the "fair to poor" columns of scores, with minimal scores indicated in the "good" column.

Inservice Training Two included a lecture on the topic of "how to conduct a parent conference" in which this writer emphasized appropriate introductions of conference participants (including the teacher and support staff), stating the purpose and anticipated outcome of the conference, preparedness, organization of work samples and handouts, and summarizing the events of a conference. This writer, along with a sample of the target teachers, role-played an annual Individualized Education Program (IEP) review.

The second topic of discussion was "nondefensive communication" (Appendix H:46) outlining the causes and processes of defensiveness, supportive examples of nondefensive communication, and an outline of steps to prevent it. Following this segment of the presentation, teachers were divided into five groups,

again utilizing the target teachers as evaluatees. Role-playing situations were provided for the teachers to demonstrate and to analyze the appropriateness of the manner in which the role-plays were conducted. At the end of the discussion and comments, the teachers were given a Parent Contact Form (Appendix I:49) and asked to complete it for all parent contacts. This form had been developed for the purpose of keeping the administrative staff apprised of (a) positive and/or negative situations and (b) the outcome of discussions with parents.

In addition to teacher inservices, a "Helpful Hints" column was submitted to the program's parent newsletter (Appendix J:51) during the fourth and fifth weeks of the program.

Again, the evaluators for each group completed a behavioral checklist on each of the target teachers. A gradual increase in "good (3)" ratings was evident upon completion of this training session.

Inservice Training Three consisted of a video presentation from The Master Teacher video series entitled "Parent-Teacher Conference" which outlined parent-teacher goal setting, developing and

implementing behavioral plans, home-school cooperation, and conflicting opinions of parents and teachers. Following the video, a parent communication guidelines sheet (Appendix K:53) was discussed, after which the third series of role-playing situations (Appendix L:55) were given to the assigned role-players and acted upon (Appendix M:57). When the evaluations were completed for this series of role-plays, significant scores in the column labeled "Good (3)" were observed. Although this concluded the series of inservice presentations, a posttest was administered (Appendix N:59) to the entire population of teachers during the sixth week inservice meeting which was identical to the pretest administered during the second week's inservice. As a result, the target teachers' scores indicated significant improvement.

During the final week, parent conferences were held for each student. These conferences enabled teachers to discuss the academic performance and growth of students, make recommendations regarding readiness for academic success, and suggestions for continuous academic and behavioral progress. This writer participated in at least one of each of the target

teachers' conferences. Again, the teachers were evaluated on the competency based teacher evaluation (Appendix C:33).

CHAPTER IV

Results

The practicum implementation was a success. Objective one was that four out of five of the target teachers would improve their verbal communication skills by 50 percent. Based on the comparison of the summative evaluations (before and after inservice presentations), the teachers demonstrated 50 to 100 percent growth in frequency for each competency.

Table 2
Evaluation Checklist

Teacher	Initial Frequency Count	Ending Frequency Count
Beth	8	23
Susie	8	19
Kim	7	22
Betty	10	26
Robin	14	36

The second objective was for teachers to improve their communication skills through role-plays, demonstrations, handouts, and lectures by an increase of 10 points on the competency based communication

checklist. The checklist indicated an improvement of 9 to 17 points for each teacher.

Table 3
Behavioral Checklist Summary

Teacher	Beginning Score	Ending Score
Beth	13	30
Susie	16	32
Kim	22	31
Betty	10	23
Robin	20	29

The identical pre/posttest scores reflected a 40- to 60-point increase in percentage scores. These tests were administered at the initial and culminating inservice training sessions.

Table 4
Pre/Posttest Summary

Teacher	Pretest	Posttest
Beth	40%	100%
Susie	40%	80%
Kim	40%	100%
Betty	40%	80%
Robin	60%	100%

Through interactive inservices, the target teachers were able to role-play specific situations, receive positive and negative feedback and critique over a period of time. By providing immediate feedback regarding parent-teacher conference evaluations, teachers were able to utilize the strategies presented. The interactive inservices proved to be very helpful, as this writer often received verbal feedback from the administrators and teachers.

The following is a rewrite of an actual interview conducted at the conclusion of the summer program. This interview was conducted in an attempt to provide supportive data regarding results.

1. What are the two most significant tips you utilized in parent-teacher conferencing?

"Using language parents can understand and being very descriptive."

2. Are you aware of the importance of establishing a rapport with parents and stating the purpose of the conference?

"Yes, through inservices I was made aware of having a good rapport with parents and other strategies necessary for positive conferencing."

3. Are you familiar with the term vagueness? If so, please explain.

"When the teacher is not completely honest with parents, doesn't give specific answers, goes around the question or issues."

4. Do you provide supportive examples and data when stating educational decisions?

"Yes, I have the child's work folder, chartings, and listed activities to share with parents."

5. Were the inservices helpful to you?

"Yes, I now have no anxiety as a teacher when I go into a parent conference. I know how specific I need to be as a teacher and as a future parent I know how much information I am to be apprised of."

6. Will you be able to utilize these techniques and strategies when involved in parent-teacher conferences in your professional setting?

"Yes, because I had bad experiences as a beginning teacher, I am now more confident in dealing with parents."

This interviewee was a representative of the target sample of teachers.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

Although the practicum implementation was successful (as the objectives were met with above anticipated mastery scores), it is believed that effective communication skills need to be emphasized continuously.

Teachers are often faced with situations that create anxiety and conflict for them when conferencing with parents. There needs to be a series of inservice training sessions which would include sharing research data, video tapes displaying conflicting and nonconflicting situations with do's and don'ts for conferencing. A teacher handbook should be compiled with conference tips, verbal and nonverbal skills, appropriate appearance when meeting with parents, the use of educational terminology when working with parents and working as a team to educate parents and students.

Had time permitted, topics would have been divided over a nine-week session and consultants would have been utilized with expertise in the field of

communication skills. The competency based teacher evaluations would have been utilized as an initial, interim, and final document whereby demonstrated growth could have been charted and shared with the observed teachers.

The experience, developed handouts, and checklists will be shared with teachers in another professional setting (school) by requesting permission to share parent conference and communication skills tips at a regular faculty meeting early in the school year. It is believed that the target population will utilize and share these techniques with others in their workplaces and make a difference in parent-teacher communication which should result in increased parental involvement and positive interaction between the home and school.

Reference List

- Canter, Lee. Parent Conference Book. Santa Monica, CA: Cantor and Associates, Inc., August, 1986.
- DeBruyn, Robert L. The Master Teacher: Getting in Shape for Parent Contact. Vol. 22, No. 7, Manhattan, KS: The Master Teacher, Inc., October 15, 1990.
- Fryre, Suzanne. Personal Interview. Classroom Teacher, Dade County, Florida, Graduate Student, Nova University, August 5, 1991.
- Kappelman, M. D., Murray and Paul Ackerman, Ph.D. Between Parent and School. New York: Dial Press, 1977.
- Klein, Alan. R. Role Playing in Leadership Training and Group Problem Solving. New York: Association Press, 1956.
- Lawrence, Gerda and Madeline Hunter. Parent-Teacher Conferencing. El Segundo, CA: TIP Publications, May 1988.
- The Master Teacher: Parent-Teacher Conferences (Video Series), Producer James M. Benjamin, Manhattan, Kansas, 1984.
- Rutherford Jr., R. and Eugene Edgar. Teachers and Parents . . . A Guide to Interaction and Cooperation. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1979.
- Salvia, John and James E. Ysseldyke. Assessment in Special and Remedial Education. Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin, 1981/1978.
- Stallworth, John T. and David T. Williams. A Survey of Parents Regarding Parent Involvement in Schools. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, December 1982.
- Wells, Theodora. Keeping Your Cool Under Fire. Beverly Hills, CA: Wells Associates, 1980.

Appendices

Appendix A
Teacher Survey

Appendix A
Teacher Survey

Please respond to each of the following statements as they apply to you.
Return the survey to Karla Gary.

1. I feel confident in sharing educational information with parents.

Yes No

2. I feel intimidated and/or uncomfortable when parents oppose my educational recommendations regarding their child's needs.

Yes No

3. I always have an action plan when discussing a student's misbehavior with his/her parents.

Yes No

4. I am in need of helpful hints regarding effective communication skills for teachers.

Yes No

5. I utilize verbal and nonverbal communication skills when conferencing with parents.

Yes No

6. If more training was available in effective parent-teacher communication, I would probably participate in it.

Yes No

Appendix B
Pretest

Appendix B**Pretest**

Name _____

Date _____

Please mark True or False.

- T F 1. It is important for parents to know that you appreciate their time.
- T F 2. Teachers must present themselves as personable, well groomed and well prepared when conferencing with parents.
- T F 3. Teachers should exhibit expectation, energy, enthusiasm and ego when discussing educational issues with parents.
- T F 4. Behavioral concerns should always be discussed before educational issues so that a behavior plan can be developed between the home and school.
- T F 5. It is important for teachers to be confident, use body language and vary in voice tone and intensity, yet give vague information regarding conflicting educational opinions.

Appendix C
Teacher Evaluation

Appendix C

Teacher Evaluation

Name _____

Date _____

Evaluator _____

Competency	Frequency	Comments
Introduces self and states purpose		
Enthusiastic smiles/gestures		
Uses language parents can understand		
Asks clear and concise questions		
Uses examples and samples to support educational decisions		
Extinguishes debate in conflict		
Summarizes information shared and discusses follow-up		
Directs/redirects conversation to the original topic		

Appendix D
Role-Play

Appendix D

Role-Play

1. Student alleges that the teacher called our daughter "Stink ". Parent, in a rage, comes to confront the teacher, wants to debate with you when in fact you called student aside to discuss personal hygiene.
2. Parents are concerned that you're a teacher who has never taught Special Ed., or remedial skills, etc. How will you "sell yourself" and help them feel more at ease and confident?
3. Parents want to know if their child will pass as a result of the summer program and put you on the spot about retention or promotion for the coming school year. How will you handle it?
4. In spite of the positive reports you're giving to the parents, they insist that Sandy has academic and behavioral problems (her scores on the ITBS were below 80 and 90 percentiles). They accuse you of letting her "slide by." They give this long, detailed story about a fall she had at age 18 months, and behavior problems she had in second grade . . . she's now in fifth grade.
5. Parents have nothing good to say about how Joey is progressing. They want to call the principal in because you're "falsifying educational information." They also threaten you by calling the superintendent of schools. What will you say?

Appendix D

Role-Play

1. You are accused of taking the child's bathroom privileges (can't leave class without permission) and not allowing him to earn hall pass privileges back.
2. A Specific Learning Disability student who is mainstreamed for math has a D average. Parents accuse you of neglecting the child's special needs.
3. Parents suggest that you are never prepared to meet their daughter's educational needs due to your supplemental positions in the school (i.e., nonprescriptive teaching, no individualized lesson plans, no organized task sheets, no up to date charts . . .)
4. You are involved in an initial conference to inform the parents that their son is failing three subjects and the county's minimum basic skills (MBS). His behavior has not improved since suspension last June (it's now October).
5. The parents accuse you of not liking their son. You pick on him and embarrass him in front of other classes. They say you aren't a warm and caring teacher.

Appendix D

Role-Play

1. You need to inform the parent that Michael has been absent to school eight days so far this marking period (this is the interim period). Within the last week, he's been absent three out of five days. Parent insists that her child leaves home at 7:45 each day and doesn't believe her child does any "wrong."
2. Sally is failing reading and language. You need to solicit parental support and follow-up regarding homework, assignment pad, and assistance with new materials. Parent works, doesn't have time for follow-up, wants to place total responsibility on the school.
3. The parent requested a conference to discuss concerns about the child's recent attitude (he hates school, the teacher . . .). You need to inform the parent of the child's inappropriate school behaviors (yelling out, off-task frequently, disturbing other students . . .) and work out a "mutual" action plan.
4. Because the recommendation for promotion or retention will be considered after your final summer progress report, you need to inform the parents that Karen has made sufficient progress to go to third grade. However, you want the parents to know that your recommendation is to be considered along with school staff and is not the final decision.
5. It is your final conference and you need to inform the parents that Kelly has improved academically. You're concerned that she may be Attention Deficit Disordered and possibly Learning Disabled. Remember you do not diagnose!

Note: Parents are very defensive.

Appendix E
Behavioral Checklist

Appendix E

Behavioral Checklist

Teacher _____			Date _____		
3	Good	2	Fair	1	Poor
	Enthusiastic	3	2	1	Lack of Emotion
	Clear and Concise	3	2	1	Vague and Fragmented
	Good Timing (in dialogue)	3	2	1	Too long/short
	Logical order of information	3	2	1	Disjointed information
	Supportive examples provided	3	2	1	No supportive information
	Vivid and succinct language	3	2	1	Flowery/jargonized language
	Pervasive	3	2	1	Non Pervasive
	Make eye contact	3	2	1	No eye contact
	Appropriate body language	3	2	1	No body language/lethargic
	Shows warmth (through facial expression/smile)	3	2	1	No facial expression
	Summarize information/provides closing statement	3	2	1	No summary/closure
Total Column Scores		_____	_____	_____	

Appendix F
Master Teacher
Getting in Shape for Parent Contact



MASTER Teacher Tips...

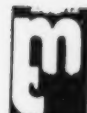
The "Idiot" Syndrome

These students have standard responses which include "I've never seen that before" and "I don't know anything about that." They use expressions like "Huh?" "I don't understand," and even "I'm dumb." They have potential, but use the "idiot" syndrome as a cover.

The primary cause of this behavior is lack of self-confidence. These students have discovered a way of excusing themselves from trying, much less achieving. The primary human need being revealed is to escape the pain of failure. Believe it or not, these students would rather be regarded as "idiots" than to try and fail, thereby confirming to all that they aren't bright. The secondary need being revealed is a burr under the saddle which they need badly.

You can help these students by taking four steps. First, ask them questions in private in order to identify their real feelings regarding their abilities. Second, point out every strength, compliment every positive personality trait, and move closer to them. Remember, everyone else moves away from them or laughs at them. These are two mistakes you can't make. Third, ask them to restate their abilities after you have identified them. Fourth, vary the way you explain directions and give assignments in order to find the way that makes it easiest for these students to understand. Allow them to feel that they are improving and making progress. Review work with them privately. And make allowances for errors— if effort is being made. In the process, refer them for counseling and seek help from parents early on.

Assuming that this student understands, assign units and directions the first time they are given is a mistake. It's also a mistake to assume that the student acts like an "idiot" to "bug" us. This is not true. That's why we must take the time to assess the true potential of this student.



Points to Ponder

privately or with colleagues

1. Make a checklist that we can use to determine the SHAPE we're in.
2. How can we encourage parents to become more involved in their child's education?
3. Discuss the responsibility of the professional in a professional layperson relationship.
4. Describe the last time you talked with a parent about a child's misbehavior. What advice did you give? Did it include a plan of action?
5. What techniques can we use to keep our energy level high?



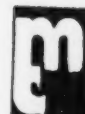
To give real service you must add something which cannot be bought or measured with money, and that is sincerity and integrity.

—Donald A. Adams



Leadership Lane
P.O. Box 1207
Marionville, Kansas 66502

Volume 22, Number 7, July 1994. This journal is published by The MASTER Teacher, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing quality educational resources for teachers and parents. The journal is published quarterly and is available to members of The MASTER Teacher for \$5.00 per year. The journal is also available for purchase by non-members for \$8.00 per year. The journal is published by The MASTER Teacher, Leadership Lane, P.O. Box 1207, Marionville, Kansas 66502.



The MASTER Teacher

Volume 22

Number 7

Getting
In Shape
For Parent
Contact

Master Teacher
Getting in Shape for Parent Contact

Appendix F

A prerequisite for effectiveness

Some parents are eager to come to school to see us, keep in touch with us, and get our advice. Some are not. It's been said that those parents who frequent the school the most are those who need it the least—and those parents who need to come to school the most seldom enter the door. This is all the more reason we need to be ready for parent contact. Whether it's a casual meeting, a formal conference, a school activity, or a back to school night, we need to be "in shape" for parent contact. Because it's the end of the first grading period and a natural time for parent contact, it might be a good time to evaluate the kind of shape we are in.

**Be sincere and straightforward
and very much aware that
a smile is a necessity.**

Gerry Marx, president of Gamma Presentations, uses the acronym SHAPE to describe five factors for effective communication. It's easy to expand upon these factors and adapt them to meet our needs for successful parent contact.

"S" is for being *sincere and straight* with parents—and remembering that a *smile* will work better than a frown. In truth, it's not very smart to use any other approach if we want to build a relationship with parents, knowing that home school cooperation is a key to helping a child improve behavior or academic achievement. Too, we must not forget to use a sincere smile when saying good bye, no matter how things went. Remember, our "closing" is really part of our "opening" for the next time—and our final image sets the stage for our next contact with parents.

©1991 by Gamma Presentations

"H" is for being *helpful*. In attitude and action, we must be prepared to help parents rather than simply lay a problem at their doorstep. Therefore, before meeting with parents, we need to make three decisions. First, decide what we intend to do to help. Second, decide what parents can do to help. Third, decide what the student can do to help. And we must know that both parent and child may decide to do nothing. But we, as professional educators, can't choose such a course.

"A" is a reminder to be *accepting and appreciative* of parent interest or concern. If we show even a hint of rejection of parents or a child, all is lost. Remember, we can reject behavior, but we can't reject a child and then expect positive results. And no matter what the situation, parents need to be told that we appreciate their time, the effort they've taken to see us, and the information, insights, or perspectives they may have given us. This teacher action is more than good manners. It's good professional business.

**It may not be fair, but the
responsibility for being enthusiastic
always rests with the professional.**

"P" stands for *personal projection and personal hygiene*. Both are vitally important to parent contact and leave little room for alternatives. We simply must choose to be personable, well groomed, professional, and prepared. Regardless of the day we've had or the problems we're trying to resolve, we can't be unfriendly or distant or fall apart at the seams. Neither can we claim to be so busy that we didn't have time to get student work ready or prepare points we wanted to make. It simply won't work. And don't think personal hygiene isn't important. It is. That's why it's wise to check ourselves out if we've had a hectic day. Poor personal hygiene can be very detrimental to our effectiveness in a parent conference. When deciding on and checking out our own grooming, we should think of how our image will come across to the parents we're trying to influence.

"E" is for *energy, expectations, efficiency, and enthusiasm*. We may be at our wits' end, but we can't show it. Parents will not acquire energy if we

don't have any. Neither will they hold high expectations of their child's potential if we seem helpless and hopeless. A high level of both energy and expectations reflects our ability to handle the tasks of being a teacher—and demonstrates the efficiency with which we will complete those tasks. It may not be fair, but that's the way it is in any professional layperson relationship. If our doctor gives up, we are prone to give up too. If our lawyer gives up, we will likely do so too. That's the way it is—and that's why enthusiasm is a vital part of preparedness for parent contact.

It's said that enthusiasm is contagious. Yet, it's not nearly as contagious as the lack of it. If we're not enthusiastic about what we're teaching and about helping a child find success in the classroom, then it's almost impossible to influence parents in positive ways. This means we've got to maintain a high level of energy, expectations, efficiency, and enthusiasm if we want parents to take our advice.

**The Master Teacher knows that
parent contacts are important—and the
SHAPE we're in can affect our image.**

The Master Teacher is very much aware that parent contact comes in many forms. We have casual meetings in grocery stores and on the streets—and formal contact in schools. Our contacts with parents take place in advisory group meetings, visitations, PTA/PTO meetings, and conferences. In each case, an image is formed. And this image ought to reflect upon us in positive ways.

The Master Teacher knows the SHAPE we're in is important to such contacts. We are professional educators. We have been entrusted with the care and the education of the children of our communities. Make no mistake. When we're not in SHAPE for parent contact we do everyone a disservice, especially ourselves.

Carol K. [Signature]

Appendix F Master Teacher Getting in Shape for Parent Contact

Appendix G
Vague Response Sheet

Appendix G

Vague Response Sheet

The vagueness terms found in the combined lectures and their frequency of occurrence are shown in the table below.

Most Frequently Occurring Vagueness Response

Response	Total Occurrences
Some	370
Many	179
Of Course	118
Things	108
A Little	102
Might	96
Few	84
Actually	83
Much	82
Something	75
Probably	74
As Far As	71
Perhaps	64
You See	58
May	57
In Fact	54
Maybe	53
Ok	53
You Know	52
Almost	48
Sort of ("Sorta")	44
Type of ("Typea")	42
The Rest	39
Somewhat	37
Seems	35
Various	32
Kind Of ("Kinds")	31
Several	31
Seem	29
Conditions	29
A Certain	26
Not Too	25
In Essence	24
And Other	23
And So On	23
Total	<u>3351</u>
Total of All Vagueness Responses	<u>3503</u>

Appendix H
Inservice Training II
Non-Defensive Communication

Appendix H

Inservice Training II
Non-Defensive Communication

How to Conduct a Parent Conference

Begin with greeting

Introduce others in the meeting (support/
administrative staff).

Example: Staffing of initial placement

State the purpose for meeting (may come before or
after introductions).

Make sure you're organized - have all materials
(handouts, work samples forms) readily available.

Thank them for coming.

Summarize events of conferences

*Role-playing and annual review

Non-Defensive Communication (NDC)

Definition: "absence of threats, centering,
taking responsibility for oneself, planning,
taking risks, and keeping control over self."

What causes defensiveness?

- Processes:
1. sequences of objective events.
 2. subjective personal choices (not realizing options) like being a reaction with no plan

In most cases defensiveness allies control, power, and authority.

i.e., NDC is a matter of self choice

Appendix H

Examples: Being accused of teaching kina writing inappropriately, have too many phase changes, and you are a non-effective communicator, yet you're trying?

How can we handle this?

1. Buy Time (count to 10)
NDC "I'm taking a minute to think about that."
2. Respond only to positive surface content NDC.
"Yes I have learned many of the techniques."
3. Stop talking.
4. Give/ask for feedback.
5. Report, DON'T express, the feelings and stop talking.
6. Handle the hidden feelings or emotional load.
"That's one view."
"Is that right" (non-sarcastically).
7. Use a close off statement or action.
"I appreciate your concern, however . . ."

Appendix I
Parent Contact Form

Appendix I

Parent Contact

Teacher _____

Grade _____

Name	Date	Discussion / Outcome

Appendix J
Newsletter Articles

Appendix J

Newsletter Articles

**HELPFUL HINTS
FOR PARENT
CONFERENCES**

by Karla Gary

Here are a few commonly used terms and definitions that may be helpful to you.

Auditory Perception - the ability to receive sounds accurately and to understand what they mean.

Modality - the pathways through which an individual receives information and learns.

Remediation - an educational program designed to teach a person to overcome difficulty through training and education.

Visual Perception - identifying, organizing and interpreting information received through the eyes.

**MARK YOUR
CALENDAR**

August 2nd:
In-House Field Trip - Science Eye "Digging Into Science." Last day for students.

August 5th: Parent Conferences begin.

**HELPFUL HINTS
FOR PARENT
CONFERENCES**

by Karla Gary

As we prepare for our end of the summer parent/teacher conferences, make sure...

a. that the information shared is not over-whelming to you.

b. you understand the educational terminology.

c. you ask questions.

d. you have provided as much background information on your child as possible.

e. you do not get caught up in long range predictions based on test data.

f. you remember that the parent, the teacher and the school are a team, working towards an appropriate education for every child.

**MARK YOUR
CALENDAR**

August 2nd: In-House Field Trip - Science Eye "Digging Into Science."

August 5th: Parent Conferences begin.



Appendix K
Parent Communication Form

Appendix K

PARENT COMMUNICATION

Guidelines for Informal Conferences

1. Conferences MUST be confidential, move out of ear shot.
2. Make sure child is not present during conference when child is being discussed.
3. Validate the parents' concern.
4. Be a good listener. Remember this is not necessarily a personal attack on you.
5. Say something positive about their child.
6. Refer only to the parents' child - avoid comparisons to other children.
7. Avoid entering into an argument with the parent.
8. Don't diagnose or prescribe medication. Refer these matters to administration and guidance immediately.
9. Address observable behaviors ONLY.
10. Dismiss parents graciously if approached at inopportune times.
11. When making closure, thank parents for bringing matters to your attention and determine follow-up procedures.

Appendix L
Video/Discussion Role Playing

Appendix L

Video/Discussion Role-Playing

<u>Evaluator</u>	<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Parent</u>	<u>Reporter</u>
	Beth	Ann	Penny
	Kim	Mary	Rod
	Susie	Jean	Victor
	Robin	Ray	Phyllis
	Betty	Phil	Allison

The groups will role-play Do's and Don'ts and appropriate conference skills.

Remember to:

Greet parent positively
 Start conference with positive statement about the child.
 Refrain from vagueness
 Use language parents understand
 Listen to parents
 Have an action plan
 Summarize information

Appendix M
Inservice III: Role-Plays

Appendix M

Inservice III: Role-Plays

1. You have to discuss Jason's aggressive physical behavior with his mother. You also want her to consider counseling for him. How will you address these concerns with her?
2. You and Joey's parents disagree on issues related to his diet, follow through on homework and his bedtime. His mother accuses you of trying to "call the shots" in her home.
3. Mr. and Mrs. Uncertain don't believe their daughter hid her progress report because of the areas of concerns indicated on it, but rather, you are making her extremely nervous with the overall pressure and workload of third grade.
4. Upon deciding upon eligibility for Exceptional Student Education program, you as the regular education teacher do not agree to the proposed placement of part-time learning disability and insist on this student being staffed full time. The entire committee becomes defensive.
5. You have requested that Jan's parents conference with you to discuss her disrespectful attitude and not following school or class rules. Her mother and father are educators. Her father is an administrator in your school.

Appendix N
Posttest

Appendix N

POSTTEST

Name _____

Date _____

Please mark True or False.

- T F 1. It is important for parents to know that you appreciate their time.
- T F 2. Teachers must present themselves as personable, well groomed and well prepared when conferencing with parents.
- T F 3. Teachers should exhibit expectation, energy, enthusiasm and ego when discussing educational issues with parents.
- T F 4. Behavioral concerns should always be discussed before educational issues so that a behavior plan can be developed between the home and school.
- T F 5. It is important for teachers to be confident, use body language and vary in voice tone and intensity, yet give vague information regarding conflicting educational opinions.